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## NOTE ON MOON FANCIES.

G. S. H.

Principal E. H. Russell, of the State Normal School of Worcester, has kindly sent me the replies of one hundred and eighty-four normal school pupils and recent graduates, mostly girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, on their own early and present feelings and ideas concerning the moon, the following note on which is not without value and interest as supplementing Dr. Slaughter's<sup>1</sup> recent article.

Of these persons eleven specified in their early childhood grave and prolonged feeling that the moon might fall, and several dared not look at it because it made this fear painful. Sometimes it took the form of fear of conflagration if it touched the earth, for it often seemed a ball of fire, but more often they feared that it would crush them. In seven very distinct cases the person in the moon was a woman with a child, thought to be the Virgin and the Christ Child. In one case the notion long persisted that there were four moons appearing in turn. Later, when phases were learned, the idea still persisted that it was only another way of speaking of four moons. Sometimes, when it was little seen, it figured largely in the imagination. Some who had heard it was green cheese insisted that it was a yellow one, or perhaps hoped it was a Swiss or Dutch cheese and wanted to go there because they liked cheese, etc.

About forty specified that they long believed that the moon moved, followed them, or often ran this way and that toward or away from it, and sometimes were terrified that they could not escape it, but it went wherever they did. Not a few identified it with God or His all-seeing eye, which could not be escaped. For some this pursuit was friendly and protective, but to more it was inimical or painful.

A few saw a large variety of small animals in the moon. Sometimes they thought them immune to fire, which was held to be the moon's substance. That the moon could see and had some kind of consciousness of the child's acts was a very prevalent idea. To some the moon gave great ecstasy. They would shout and cry out when it was seen. One called it a man, but the crescent moon a lady. More than a score won-

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<sup>1</sup>The Moon in Childhood and Folk-lore. *Am. Jour. of Psy.*, April, 1902, Vol. 13, pp. 294-318.

dered why it did not fall down, it seemed so heavy. Fifty-six thought there was a man in the moon. A few persistently interpreted it as a face looking down at them. Others still have a great desire to go toward or get near the full moon and strive, though quite often in vain, to correct their childish ideas of its distance and size.

Several always felt cold and shuddery at sight of the moon. One thought it must have white grass on it, while several thought it silver. Some were for years fascinated by it; these long for its appearance, never tire of gazing at it, and would move their bed to the window that it might shine full in their face at night. One remembers first noticing the moon at the age of five and crying, "Why there's God. Halloo, Mr. God." Several have hovered between pleasure and pain as to what would happen if the moon caught them. Six thought it full of fairies. One said, when it looked red, the moon weather was so warm that the fairies came out of it and turned into stars. A few can remember actually reaching for the moon and longing to get it, touch it, hold it, see what it was made of, and taste it. A few girls fancied the moon escorted them on their evening walks as a protector, if not almost as a beau.

Many record their experiences in trying, some with and some without success, to trace out the features of the man they heard of in the moon, devising schemes of how he got there; wondering what he did; sympathizing with his loneliness; imagining friends or a family for him; wanting to help him; and even feeling tender sentiments toward him.

One heard as a child that if anything bad happened, the moon ran away and hid, and still feels relief at sight of it. Several want to do something extraordinary whenever there is a moon, especially a full one. Three thought the moon was one of the parents of the stars and cared for them. A very few always shudder at and still have a dread of seeing it. Two thought the moon was God's house in which he lived. The moon more often has sight than any other sense; it watches all that goes on and if it could speak could tell us of distant friends. To some it can also hear. One child, thinking the moon was God's face, would always scrutinize it to find in it expression of approval or disapproval of her acts. One boy of five thought a man went about with a wagon load of moons hanging them up, and the idea that each locality has a moon of its own is widespread.

One always thought the moon a large glassy cent and could dimly see a man's face through it. Some developed ideas about the moon eating the cheese, or think the moon full of mice. Young children often think the moon is lighted and hung out, perhaps with strings. Some distinctly change, either with or

without effort to do so, from seeing a whole man's figure to seeing a simple face, or *vice versa*. One always laughed at the moon, thinking it funny. A few think it rolls along the sky. One was long curious to know how he viewed things on earth. One, "despite the geographies," believes it to be about the size of a dinner plate. To a very few, it is an opening in the sky through which the sun shines. To a few God has put it in the sky to protect children. One always feels as though a friend were dead on seeing it, although generally the sadness is rather enjoyable. One traces the details of heaven in its shadows, thinking it is heaven. To some it seems always smiling; to one it always suggests death. Two are troubled because they always see a woman, not a man in it. One thought it a grown-up star and wondered it did not twinkle.

Several are greatly fascinated by the wonder and awe of it or take great satisfaction in simply gazing at it for a long time. To one the man was Santa Claus. One was long sceptical when told that her brother in New York saw the same moon. One saw in it great numbers of people and animals that had died. One was greatly alarmed and grieved because it seemed so pale one night. Very often the transition from fear to love is noted. Several think there are two moons, a pale one seen by day and the yellow one by night. Some think the crescent hungry and the full moon plethoric with food. Some run races with it. One long thought it a policeman watching people; one that the full moon belonged to Worcester and the other phases were moons from near by cities here on a visit. Loneliness as well as depression are sometimes the chief feeling. In some it provokes almost nothing but reverie and silence. A few have an *eclaircissement* or else are sceptics from the start in maintaining that there is no man in it. Two, learning that it was cold and dead, with no air or water, watched it and found it so merry that they felt it a hypocrite practicing deception.

Some play hide and seek with, and a few talk to it. One specifies greatest dread when it is near the horizon, because it is so close. Perhaps it is wild as well as fiery and better kept behind one than in front. One imagined a star party with the moon an honored guest. One sees an old woman sitting and telling stories to children at her feet. Another sees two pails of water in her hand. Another finds a pile of sticks on fire. For one a moon-glade on the water is a path to it. Some dread to go to bed on a moonlight night, because it seems losing so much. For several the moon shines when people are good, and when it is away they are bad. One can never gaze on it if she has done wrong that day. As she was going home one night after a terrible storm, the moon shone from behind a cloud just in time to prevent her from falling into a deep hole. This

she thought a special providence. She can still not bear to hear of a crime committed on a moonlight night.

One thought the moon and the sun the same, only it is paler at night because of darkness. One always cries at the sight of the moon, she knows not why. Another associates it with water. The moon came out just as one child was hiding, and she was terrified to find herself discovered. Some the moon soothes and gives a sense of ease, calmness and comfort; it is a great sympathizer. Several speak of being deeply affected by the moon in the early teens and of spending much more time in watching it. On hearing some one say, the moon is too beautiful to talk about, it long seemed to a young girl sacrilegious to speak of it. One saw a woman in a ruffled skirt and sunbonnet sitting in the moon, which was her house, lit so brightly that she could not see to walk about because the light was in her eyes.